



BLM *News*



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Proving Points!

Mother Nature proves the need for Hazardous Fuels Reduction in Dry Fork Canyon

Mother Nature is proving that Dry Fork Canyon is in need of hazardous fuels reduction which is currently underway by the Vernal Field Office of the Bureau of Land management (BLM). Since July 19 there have been ten fires that have been started by lightning in Dry Fork Canyon. These ten fires have burned over 375 acres. Four of the ten natural fires have landed within the acres currently being treated in the fuels reduction project. Approximately 300 acres of the McConkie Ranch fire were within the treatment area; along with the one acre Dry Fork fire, the two acre Ashley Creek fire, and the one-tenth of an acre Dry Fork # 4 fire.

Fire is one of Mother Nature's ways of keeping her forests healthy. The Healthy Forest Initiative was put into motion to help stop and prevent catastrophic fires, which we have been seeing the last few years. During the last century firefighters have worked hard to suppress all wildland fires. Suppression combined with lack of active forest and rangeland management has made the forests and rangelands unhealthy. Add in the drought factor and you have forests and rangelands that are overloaded with dry fuels prime for burning!

The problem with this situation is these fires are no longer the low-intensity fires that are natural for the ecosystem. They are catastrophic wildfires that burn at extreme temperatures, killing the plants and trees and leaving a long lasting scare on the ecosystem. These fires no longer help rejuvenate our forest/rangelands allowing for new growth, but they kill everything sterilizing the soils making it hard the forest or rangelands to recover!

Under the Healthy Forest Initiative Fire Management is working to reduce fuel loads in our forests and rangelands to help them get back their health. Fuels reduction can come in many shapes and sizes including: mechanical treatment, prescribed fire, animal treatments (goats), etc.

The Dry Fork Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project is one of these projects that have become a result of the Healthy Forest Initiative. The BLM Vernal Field Office is currently in the middle of a 771 acre fuels reduction project. The project consists of four parts: cutting the fuels using a chainsaw, clearing 66 foot line all the way around the parcels by using a chainsaw and man power, burning each parcel and then reseeding. The BLM is in the process of working to finish step two of the project. The last two steps will occur this winter and next spring.

One way or another something has to be done about our forests and rangelands conditions. If we don't, Mother Nature will! She will find a way... whether it be fire, bugs, or some other means. Dry Fork Canyon is a perfect example!

For further information call the BLM Fire Management Building at (435) 781-2746 or visit the BLM website at <http://www.blm.gov/utah/vernal>.

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